

IN THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims is provided in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.121:

1. (previously presented) A system for performing synchronous quality function deployment (QFD) over a computer network, the computer network including a real-time server, a lightweight thin client server, a data storage device, and at least two client systems, the system comprising:
 - a QFD tool including:
 - a 'Create New QFD' session component;
 - an 'Active QFD session' component, the active QFD session component providing a common area operable for facilitating collaboration among session members via computer screens of said at least two client systems;
 - a 'Finished QFD session' component; and
 - a 'Scheduled QFD session' component;
 - wherein said lightweight thin client server executes said QFD tool and said at least two client systems access said QFD tool in real time via said real-time server.
2. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said 'Create New QFD session' component includes instructions for establishing a new QFD session by a user, said instructions including:
 - a QFD session identification;
 - a start time of the QFD session; and
 - an end time of the QFD session;

wherein further an identification of the user creating the QFD session is associated with the QFD session.

3. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said 'Scheduled QFD session' component includes a listing of QFD sessions that are scheduled, said listing of QFD sessions comprising:

QFD session identifiers;
QFD session creators;
date of said QFD sessions; and
time of said QFD sessions.

4. (canceled)

5. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said 'Active QFD session' component enables a user to view a listing of QFD sessions in progress.

6. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein said 'Active QFD session' component requires password authorization for participating in an active QFD session, and wherein further, by selecting a QFD session in progress, a user enters said QFD session.

7. (original) The system of claim 6, wherein said 'Active QFD session' component displays:

a collaborative workspace;
a list of attendees;
a voting booth; and
a facilitation control panel.

8. (original) The system of claim 7, wherein attendees of an active QFD session exchange information in real time, said information including:

critical to quality attributes;
critical to quality values;

key control parameters;
key control parameter values;
interaction weights; and
house of quality data.

9. (original) The system of claim 8, wherein said information is exchanged in at least one of:

audio form;
graphical form;
video form; and
text form.

10. (original) The system of claim 8, wherein said information includes:
documents;
files; and
programs.

11. (original) The system of claim 7, wherein said voting booth includes instructions for selecting and prioritizing said information exchanged in said active QFD session.

12. (original) The system of claim 7, wherein said list of attendees includes attendee information including:

name of attendee;
role of attendee;
job title of attendee;
business affiliation of attendee; and
geographical location of attendee.

13. (original) The system of claim 12, wherein said role of attendee includes at least one of:

- a session facilitator;
- a session creator; and
- a team member.

14. (original) The system of claim 7, wherein said facilitation control panel enables a session facilitator superior access to active QFD session activities, said superior access including:

- view voting booth activities;
- override voting booth activities;
- approve voting booth activities and voting results;
- edit said information exchanged in said collaborative workspace; and
- approve access to active QFD sessions.

15. (original) A method for performing synchronous quality function deployment (QFD) over a computer network, the computer network including a real-time server, a light-weight thin client server, a data storage device, and at least two client systems, the method comprising:

- receiving a request to participate in an active QFD session;
- presenting a list of active QFD sessions;
- providing access to a selected active QFD session including:
- presenting QFD session information relating to said active QFD session;
- providing a common area operable for facilitating collaboration among session members via computer screens of said at least two client systems;
- upon completion of said collaboration, presenting a voting booth option;
- receiving votes from said session members relating to said QFD information via said voting booth option; and
- tabulating said votes;

updating QFD session information in said data storage device to reflect results of said collaboration; and
electronically generating scorecards.

16. (original) The method of claim 15, further comprising a facilitation control panel option operable for allowing a facilitator of said active QFD session to control said active QFD session and direct communications among said session members.

17. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein said QFD session information includes at least one of:

an attendee list of session members online for said active QFD session;
critical to quality (CTQ) attributes;
CTQ values;
key control parameters (KCPs);
KCP values; and
a facilitator of said active QFD session.

18. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein said attendee list includes at least one of:

attendee names;
attendee business roles;
attendee job titles;
attendee business affiliation; and
attendee geographic location.

19. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein said collaboration includes exchanging information among said session members, said information including at least one of:

applications;

files; and
documents.

20. (original) The method of claim 19, wherein said information is exchanged in a formatting including at least one of:

text;
graphics;
audio; and
video.

21. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein said updating said QFD information includes updating said QFD information to reflect the relative importance of CTQ attributes and CTQ values adopted or approved during said active QFD session.

22. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein said providing access to said active QFD session includes verifying whether a person requesting access to said active QFD session is at least one of:

a creator of said active QFD session; and
a facilitator of said active QFD session;
wherein said creator or said facilitator is prompted to choose whether or not to facilitate said active QFD session.

23. (original) The method of claim 22, wherein said facilitator is given access to a facilitation control panel operable for:

editing said QFD session information;
editing voting methods provided via said voting booth option;
viewing activities conducted by said session members.

24. (original) The method of claim 15, wherein said scorecards contain key control parameters to be monitored for a given scenario.

25. (original) The method of claim 24, wherein houses of quality for said scorecards are drilled down to subsystems.

26. (original) The method of claim 25, wherein a dashboard sits on top of said house of quality and is affected by changes in CTQs of said subsystems, said dashboard indicating top level CTQs.

27. (original) A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for performing synchronous quality function deployment (QFD) over a computer network, the computer network including a real-time server, a light-weight thin client server, a data storage device, and at least two client systems, the storage medium including instructions for causing said computer network to implement a method comprising:

- receiving a request to participate in an active QFD session;
- presenting a list of active QFD sessions;
- providing access to a selected active QFD session including:
 - presenting QFD session information relating to said active QFD session;
 - providing a common area operable for facilitating collaboration among session members via computer screens of said at least two client systems;
 - upon completion of said collaboration, presenting a voting booth option;
 - receiving votes from said session members relating to said QFD information via said voting booth option; and
 - tabulating said votes;
 - updating QFD session information in said data storage device to reflect results of said collaboration; and
 - electronically generating scorecards.

28. (original) The storage medium of claim 27, further comprising instructions for causing said computer network to implement:

a facilitation control panel option operable for allowing a facilitator of said active QFD session to control said active QFD session and direct communications among said session members.

29. (original) The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said QFD session information includes at least one of:

an attendee list of session members online for said active QFD session;
critical to quality (CTQ) attributes;
CTQ values;
key control parameters (KCPs);
KCP values; and
a facilitator of said active QFD session.

30. (original) The storage medium of claim 29, wherein said attendee list includes at least one of:

attendee names;
attendee business roles;
attendee job titles;
attendee business affiliation; and
attendee geographic location.

31. (original) The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said collaboration includes exchanging information among said session members, said information including at least one of:

applications;
files; and
documents.

32. (original) The storage medium of claim 31, wherein said information is exchanged in a formatting including at least one of:

text;
graphics;
audio; and
video.

33. (original) The storage medium of claim 29, wherein said updating said QFD information includes updating said QFD information to reflect the relative importance of CTQ attributes and CTQ values adopted or approved during said active QFD session.

34. (original) The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said providing access to said active QFD session includes verifying whether a person requesting access to said active QFD session is at least one of:

a creator of said active QFD session; and
a facilitator of said active QFD session;

wherein said creator or said facilitator is prompted to choose whether or not to facilitate said active QFD session.

35. (original) The storage medium of claim 34, wherein said facilitator is given access to a facilitation control panel operable for:

editing said QFD session information;
editing voting methods provided via said voting booth option;
viewing activities conducted by said session members.

36. (original) The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said scorecards contain key control parameters to be monitored for a given scenario.

37. (original) The storage medium of claim 36, wherein houses of quality for said scorecards are drilled down to subsystems.

38. (original) The storage medium of claim 37, wherein a dashboard sits on top of said house of quality and is affected by changes in CTQs of said subsystems, said dashboard indicating top level CTQs.